

Migrant workers and migration policy

Across the world, people migrate, within and between countries, for economic and social advancement, meeting the demand for their skills, family reunion, simply for adventure, but many others are forced to migrate because of undemocratic regimes, famine, natural disasters, war, persecution or lack of decent work and pay in the home country.

Migrant labour is not a recent phenomenon for instance between 1901 and 1910 more than 8 million Europeans emigrated to the USA. The courage and dedication of migrant workers helped build the labour movement we are benefiting from today.

Many migrant workers, half of whom are women, are exposed to low pay, discrimination and precariousness. The lack of information on labour rights in the host country increases the risk of exploitation by unscrupulous employers.

Restrictive EU and national migration policies coupled with an increasingly low recognition of refugee status send confusing messages, and lead to scapegoating and criminalisation of migrants.

In the absence of an EU common framework on migrant workers' rights, there is now a multitude of workers' status and differentiated rights e.g. EU/non EU, posted workers, seasonal workers, corporate transferees, workers linked to trade in Services (e.g. GATS), and at the lower end, undocumented migrants. Of course, one person can at different times be in more than one category.

This hierarchy of workers' rights is unacceptable and in breach of the spirit of the EU Charter of fundamental human rights.

In 2009, EPSU Congress adopted for the first time a resolution on migration calling for:

- A human rights approach, as opposed to a utilitarian approach, to migration;
- Well-resourced public services that are essential to the well-being and integration of all including of migrants and their families;
- Fighting public service cuts to guarantee that employees in local, regional,

national administrations, health and social services can deal with migrants and asylum seekers fairly and efficiently;

- Exchanging good trade union practices on equal treatment at work, fighting racism and xenophobia via campaigns, social dialogue including collective bargaining and organising migrant workers, irrespective of their status, in trade unions;
- Opposing the detention of undocumented migrants who have committed no (penal) crime ;
- Recognising the specific situation faced in the south of Europe to deal with migration when it requires a European wide answer;
- Campaigning for the ratification by EU governments of the UN Convention on the protection of the rights of all migrant workers and their families (1990).

In this section, you will find

- News relating to migration policy and migrant workers' rights
- EPSU policy, research, meetings and affiliates' actions to support and organise migrant workers, improve access to public services
- ETUC and PSI policy
- Other useful links, PICUM, UN, European Commission...
- And also check EPSU cob@news, EPSU's sectoral social dialogue committees, European Works Councils, for actions with the employers

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